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AUTHOR Williams, David L., Jr.
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ABSTRACT

The relevancy of parent education program (PEP) activities to family structures, especially non-traditional family structures, was examined among 209 responding PEPs in the states of Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas. Although programs were not randomly selected, an attempt was made to ensure that those selected included private, church, school, community, city, county, state, and federal programs. The survey instrument used covered four areas of investigation. Part I, Family Structure, asked respondents to describe the extent to which their planned program activities dealt with issues related to various family types. Part II, Topics in Parent Education, requested respondents to indicate the extent to which their planned program activities dealt with a selected range of topics. Part III, Program Description, asked respondents to describe aspects of their programs. Part IV, Participant Description, requested that respondents provide demographic information about the clients they serve according to four main variables: (1) family type; (2) employment pattern; (3) racial group; and (4) income level. Results indicated that while PEPs show signs of becoming more relevant to non-traditional families, most PEP activities are provided for traditional families. (Author/RH)

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ASSESSING PARENT EDUCATION PROGRAM RELEVANCE TO CHANGING FAMILY STRUCTURES

(Executive Summary)

A Paper Prepared by

David L. Williams, Jr.

for Presentation at the

American Educational Research Association

Annual Meeting

Los Angeles, California

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Southwest Educational Development Laboratory

Austin, Texas 78701

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ASSESSING PARENT EDUCATION PROGRAM RELEVANCE TO CHANGING FAMILY STRUCTURES

BACKGROUND

A. Introduction

Are parent education programs providing services which are relevant to changes occurring in the structure of families? Noticeable increases in the diversity of family structures is one of the very pronounced social changes taking place in the United States today. Traditionally, the ideal family has been perceived as an intact, two-parent unit with two children--one girl and one boy. Within this structure, the father worked outside the home while the mother worked at home and had major responsibilities for household and parenting duties. As a result, most parent education programs (PEPs) were initially developed to serve this type of family with mothers being the desired target audience. Given the rapid emergence of "new" family structures, there was a concern on the part of this project about the extent to which parent education programs are serving these families.

The functioning of families is influenced by their physical, social, and psychological environments. These environments form what has been the ecological setting within which families function. An ecological approach to studying how families operate can provide better insights regarding the complexity of issues, concerns, and problems that impact upon them. Each of these environments and its various subcomponents has a different effect on individual family member behavior as well as the unit as a whole.

In many cases, the inability to understand and then cope within these environments so as to positively impact upon all members has led to family "breakdowns." The resulting outcome has caused a splintering of the

"traditional" family and the growth of different family structures. In the literature, these structures include single-never married, remarried, single-divorced, separated, and "common law" parent families to name a few.

At the national, state and local levels, there is a wealth of materials, services, and programs being made available to parents and those who work with parents. One of the more common types of efforts available is parent education programs. These efforts appear to be based on the premise that parents need: more information, more awareness, more understanding, more support, and more skills with respect to rearing their children.

Parent education programs (PEPs) are complex phenomenons that have grown significantly in the past fifteen years. As a result, they (1) have a variety of formats, (2) serve a range of clients, (3) are more effective in some forms than in others, (4) are offered by a variety of providers, and (5) have various periods of duration and levels of intensity. Given these characteristics, it has become difficult to assess the general effectiveness of PEPs and, more especially, their relevance to parents in changing family structures.

Clearly, parenting and/or child rearing today are different and more difficult processes from what they were twenty years ago. Further, major responsibility for parenting can no longer be considered solely as "mother's work." Not only is cooperation and assistance from fathers desired and needed, but support from other individuals and agencies also are considered important to effective parenting and family functioning. Such support is far more useful if parenting ones can be helped to realize that (1) many of the things they do are good, (2) help is available when needed, (3) they often have to take the initiative in seeking out such assistance, and (4)

they understand how help or support can help build their strengths as parents rather than take over or take away from their roles.

Merely becoming and/or being a parent does not automatically confer upon such individuals the knowledge, skills and understandings necessary for effectively carrying out child rearing responsiblities. The rapid and constantly changing nature of our society and the stresses resulting there from, make the parenting role both complex and difficult. Not only do these create problems for the parent as a parent, but also for the parent as an individual and those seeking to provide them with services.

For many years, it was thought that parents only needed basic knowledge about how to (1) care for children's health/nutritional needs, (2) ensure that they had an appropriate set of social skills, and (3) establish a framework for their moral and religious development. But the complexities and pressures associated with growing up today call for additional knowledge and skills which exceed these "basics." The extent to which parent education programs are providing different family structures with expanded services was not clear. Certainly, PEP relevance, to a large degree, has to hinge on whether services are made available to deal with the issues of different types of families and, how effectively this is being done.

Typically, PEPs were planned and implemented to serve the traditional family structure (i.e., intact, two parents). Failure to include broader services and support to families with other structures might be a contributing factor to what is perceived as the growing irrelevance of PEPs. Experts and researchers alike including Lillie and Trohanis (1976); Aaronson (1975); Gordon (1977); Carnegie Council on Children (1977); Dahlberg and Vander Ven (1977); Comer (1978); Stevens (1978); Safran and Ledesma (1978);

Gilman and Meers (1979); Fantini and Russo (1980); Brocher (1980); Weikert (1980); and Fine (1980) support the premise that parent education programs need to be relevant and responsive to the needs of parents or families. This would seem to be especially true for those with changing structures.

The general consensus among these experts, researchers and practitioners is that such efforts must build upon the strengths of parents and families rather than using a deficit model approach in providing for their needs. Even so, it appears that there is a dearth of information regarding the extent to which PEPs provide offerings that are relevant to changing family structures. As a result, more information was sought to help determine how relevant PEPs were regarding these families. This study focused upon examining the relevance of such programs as indicated by the parenting issues dealt with, the topic focus of parenting activities, their salient characteristics and descriptions of the clients served.

B. Purpose

The problem this study examined was the relevancy of activities offered by parent education programs in a six-state region (Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas) to family structures, especially those which differed from the normal or traditional setting. As a guide for the research, five basic questions were posed:

1. What are the family type, employment pattern, racial group and income level characteristics of participants served by parent education programs in the region? in each state? by types of sponsoring organizations?
2. To what extent are planned parent education program activities related to various types of families in the region? in each

state? by types of sponsoring organizations?

3. To what extent are planned parent education activities addressing specific parent education topics in the region? in each state? by types of sponsoring organizations?
4. What are the characteristics of parent education programs in the region? in each state? by types of sponsoring organizations?
5. To what extent are the activities and characteristics of parent education programs relevant to families with different structures in the region? in each state? by types of sponsoring organizations?

C. Methods

A survey was conducted to gather information from parent education programs in a six-state region. Respondents generally were program directors and/or the person designated to fill out this questionnaire. Participants were identified from several sources including: (1) a list of previously identified PEPs during the project's material development, research, and technical assistance activities; (2) a 1978 directory of PEPs published by the Region VI U. S. Office of Education (Dallas); (3) a list of Parent Effectiveness Training programs in the region, and (4) listings of PEPs in state agency directories. Although programs were not randomly selected, an attempt was made to ensure that those selected were inclusive of private, church, school, community, city, county, state and federal programs. The basic criterion used to select the participating programs was that they offered parent education activities.

A questionnaire was developed, pretested, revised, and then mailed

to 647 parent education programs who met basic criterion. Mail and telephone follow-ups were conducted. Responses were received from 279 or 43.1% of the programs. Upon a preliminary examination of the returned instruments, seventy (70) were blank or marked "return to sender." Thus, of the 577 programs located, 209 or 36.3% of the returned questionnaires were usable and provided the data base for this report.

Four major sections characterized the questionnaire. Part I, Family Structure, asked respondents to use a five-point scale and describe the extent to which their planned program activities dealt with issues related to the various family types listed. Part II, Topics in Parent Education, requested respondents to use the same scale and describe the extent to which their planned program activities dealt with a range of listed topics. Part III, Program Description, asked respondents to describe aspects of their programs using seventeen (17) items. Part IV, Participant Description, requested that respondents provide demographic information about the clients they serve using four main variables: (1) family type, (2) employment pattern, (3) racial group, and (4) income level.

The scales for responses were similar for Parts I and II. In each part, respondents were asked to indicate their answer by choosing one of the possibilities on a five-point scale. The scale's range included:

(low) 0 = not a planned program activity; never dealt with

1 = unplanned activity; dealt with informally if it comes up

2 = unplanned, ongoing self-help groups

3 = planned activity for one time only

(high) 4 = planned, series of activities

In Part III, the main response choices were Yes or No. For Part IV, respondents chose from a scale (100, 90, 80, 70, 60, 50, 40, 30, 20, 10, 1) to estimate the percent of clients served in each demographic category.

FINDINGS

A summary of the questionnaire data analysis results is presented by Parts. Within the presentation of results for each Part, the discussion will focus upon findings from the region as a whole. Where state or sponsoring organization findings differ noticeably, a brief discussion of such differences also is included.

A. Part I - Family Structure Issues

The ten top-ranked family types whose issues are most commonly addressed by PEPs in the region is shown in Table 1. Of these, "Parents of preschool-age children" ($\bar{x}$ = 2.97), "Parents of school-age children" ($\bar{x}$ = 2.68), and "Working mothers" ($\bar{x}$ = 2.30) were the family types with the highest mean scores. More of the PEPs planned long range activities for issues of these families than any other family types. The least amount of PEP activities (not shown in Table 1) were planned for issues dealing with "Single father, with custody" ($\bar{x}$ = 1.18), "Surrogate parent" ($\bar{x}$ = 1.04) and "Single father, without custody" ($\bar{x}$ = 1.00) families.

As Table 1 further indicates, the ranking patterns of family types whose issues are most commonly addressed by parent education programs within each state and by sponsoring organizations, vary somewhat from the regional rankings. Only the rankings of Texas and public school sponsored parent education programs were closest in order to the region's rankings. Since most parent education efforts began at the preschool level, results appear to indicate that issues relating to family types with children of that age

TABLE 1. COMPARISON OF TOP TEN RANKED* FAMILY TYPES WHOSE ISSUES ARE MOST COMMONLY ADDRESSED BY PARENT EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Family Types	Region	By States						By Sponsoring Organizations					
		AR	LA	MS	NM	OK	TX	Pub. S.	Soc. S.	Church	Pvt. P-M	Pub. N-P	NA-Loc.
Parents of preschool-age children	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	1
Parents of school-age children	2	2	1	5	2	2	2	2	3	2	1	4	2
Working mothers	3	3	5	2	3	6	3	3	2	4	5	2	4
Families with both parents working	4	4	6	3	5	7	5	4	4	5	7	3	6
First-time parents	5	5	4	6	9	4	6	5	8	6	4	9	8
Single mothers	6	8	9	4	6	8	4	9	5	9	8	5	3
Parents of adolescents	7	10	3		4	2	8	6		3	3	7	9
Divorced parents	8	7	7	10	7	5	7	7	6	8	6	10	5
Separated parents	9	9	8	9	8	9	9	8	9		9		7
Teenage parents	10	6		7			10	10	7	7	10	6	10
Extended families (e.g., live-in grandmother)				8		10			10	10		8	
Foster parents			10										
Stepparents					10								

*Rank ordered by mean response scores.

Sponsoring Organizations Key: Pub. S. - Public School System; Soc. S. - Social Service Agency; Church - Church or Other Religious Organization; Pvt. P-M - Private, Profit-Making Group; Pub. N-P - Public, Non-Profit Group; NA-Loc. - No Association, Strictly Local Organization.

are still prevalent in programs.

The presence of parent education in public schools is shown by results which found that issues of school-age children's families were second ranked among those commonly dealt with by PEPs. Families with working mothers, which often have assumed to be more common among certain income and minority groups, is an emerging type of family structure. From the results, it appears that PEPs are planning activities for this family type whose growth mainly stems from an increasing number of mothers needing and/or desiring to return to the work force.

Examination of the results concerning types of families whose issues are most commonly addressed by PEPs in the region, appears to indicate that most are not providing activities relevant to changing family structures. Neither single parent (especially fathers), divorced parent, separated parent, foster parent, step-parent, nor adoptive parent families are among the highest ranked types for which PEPs more often plan activities. In addition, these family types appear to be low priority, based upon the rankings for most PEPs in each state and within the various types of sponsoring organizations.

B. Part II - Topic Focus

As a second measure of PEP relevance to changing family structures, data results were analyzed to determine what topics most PEP activities focused upon. Findings shown in Table 2 indicate the ten top-ranked topics of focus for PEP activities in the region, each state and each type of sponsoring organization. "Discipline in general" ($\bar{x}$ = 3.286) and "Communication skills" ($\bar{x}$ = 3.285) were the topic focus of most PEP activities. These were followed closely by "Self-concept and personality of children"

TABLE 2. COMPARISON OF TEN TOP-RANKED* TOPICS WHICH ARE THE FOCUS OF MOST PARENT EDUCATION PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

TOPICS	Region	By States						By Sponsoring Organizations					
		AR	LA	MS	NM	OK	TX	Pub. S.	Soc. S.	Church	Pvt. P-M	Pub N-P	NA-Loc.
Discipline in general	1	3	2	3	3	2	1	2	3	3	2	1	3
Communication skills	2	1	1	2	1	3	3	1	4	1	1	5	1
Self-concept and personality of children	3	2	4	6	2	1	4	5	2	2	4	2	2
Behavior management	4	5	4	4	4	5	2	4	1	4	3	3	4
Parent-child home activities	5	4	3	1	5	4	5	3	5	5	7	4	5
Intellectual development	6	7	7	5	9	8	6	6	6	6	10	7	7
Peer influence on children	7	8	5		7	7	7	7	10	8	5	9	6
Sibling (children in family) rivalry	8	10	6		6	6	10		7	7	6	10	8
Nutrition and foods	9	6	8	8		10	8	8	8			6	
Routine health care	10		9	7			9	9	9			8	
Wife/husband conflicts			10		8	9				9	8		9
Children's learning disabilities				9				10					
Sexual role identification		9								10			10
Home management				10	10						9		

*Rank ordered by mean response scores.

Sponsoring Organizations Key: Pub. S. - Public School System; Soc. S. - Social Service Agency; Church - Church or Other Religious Organization; Pvt. P-M - Private, Profit-Making Group; Pub. N-P - Public, Non-Profit Group; NA-Loc. - No Association, Strictly Local Organization.

($\bar{x}$ = 3.19) and "Behavior management" ($\bar{x}$ = 3.18). The three topics least focused upon were "Family planning" ($\bar{x}$ = 1.31), "Family advocacy" ($\bar{x}$ = 1.28) and "Bilingual education" ($\bar{x}$ = .80).

Traditionally, discipline has been of concern to parents and school staff. Evidence that discipline is still a concern can be seen in the results. "Communication skills" was the highest ranked topic focus in three of the six sponsoring organizations and three of the six states. This appears to indicate a concern about more effective parent, child, parent-parent, and parent-program or school staff communications.

"Parent-child home activities" was the highest ranked topic of focus by Mississippi PEPs. Results were not clear as to why the topic ranked so high in this state. "Family planning" and "Family advocacy" were least focused upon topics. This varied somewhat by sponsoring organizations and by state. "Family planning," which among other things deals with birth control, is mostly unplanned or never dealt with as a topic. This is an interesting finding, especially since a majority of the PEP clients are low income parents. Perhaps it reflects what may be a growing trend toward this being a less desirable intervention strategy for low income families.

"Family advocacy," which is often related to participation in political matters, does not appear to be a topic of PEP focus. There seems to be more focus on strengthening the family as a unit and less on members individually as they move out of the "family circle" and into society. In addition, perhaps well-trained parent advocates may be viewed as a "threat" to existing PEPs, thus, are not found to be topics of focus in their activities. While the results are unclear in this study concerning these matters, the issues are not new.

The rankings of topics focused upon by PEPs regionally, by state and by funding organizations vary noticeably and do not indicate the extent to which they are relevant to families whose structures are changing. The highest ranked topics could relate to any family type. Thus topic-wise, PEPs appear to be addressing the needs of all families, but not specifically those with changing structures.

C. Part III - PEP Characteristics

Data were collected regarding 17 different PEP characteristics. Table 3 presents a ranking of compared data results for the region as a whole, by state, and by type of sponsoring organization. For characteristics, a yes-no response format was used. Response percentages were calculated for these data. Mean scores were calculated for results in characteristics.

1. In terms of organizational structure, Table 3, Item 1 indicates that region-wide, 129 (61.7%) of the 209 PEPs were found to be associated with some larger organization. Almost one-third, 60 (28.7%), were independent of any organization while the fewest PEPs, 32 (15.3%), were reported as being within grass roots organizations with little bureaucratic structure. These patterns remain virtually constant when examined by state and by type of sponsoring organization. Slight variation can be seen in PEPs which are private, profit-making group associated or non-associated, strictly local organization programs.

In that most PEPs are associated with some larger organizational structure, it would appear that they may be part of a comprehensive approach to providing family services. Though findings are not explicitly clear regarding this, it is apparent that the program organizational levels at which PEPs are found seem to be expanding. Such expansion could mean that

TABLE 3. COMPARISON OF PARENT EDUCATION PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS*

CHARACTERISTICS	Region	By States						By Types of Sponsoring Organizations					
		AR	LA	MS	NM	OK	TX	Pub. S.	Soc. S.	Church	Pvt. P-H	Pub. N-P	NA-Loc.
1. ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE													
. Program within a larger organization	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	3
. Independent program	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	2	1
. Grass roots organization	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	3	2
2. FUNDING													
. Mostly federal	1	1	4	1	1	4	1	1	1	3	5	1	3
. Local community-based	2	3	1	3	4	1	2	3	3	2	4	2	2
. State	2	2	2	2	3	2	3	2	2	3	3	3	4
. Other	3	6	6	6	6	3	6	4	4	4	2	4	1
. Mostly dependent upon client fees	4	4	3	5	2	5	4	5	5	1	1	5	5
. Mostly dependent upon donations	5	5	5	4	5	6	5	6	6	5	6	6	6
3. PROGRAM ACTIVITIES													
. Planned meetings on specific topics	1	1	1	3	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	2
. One-to-one between parents and staff	2	2	2	2	3	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	1
. Regular meetings with changing topics	3	3	3	1	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
. Periodic meetings with changing topics	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
4. STAFF TRAITS													
. Most are professionals in child development, social work, psychology, education etc.	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
. Most have Master's or Ph.D. Degrees	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	3	2	2	2
. Most are trained lay persons	3	3	3	4	3	3	3	3	3	2	3	3	3
. Most are trained nurses	4	4	4	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
. Most are full-time	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	1	1
. Most are part-time	2	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	1	2	1
5. EVALUATION DESCRIPTION													
. Informal, at end of course	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	1
. Standard form at end of course	2	3	2	3	2	3	2	3	3	1	1	4	4
. Required by funding agency	3	2	3	4	4	4	3	2	4	3	4	3	2
. At discretion of instructor	4	4	5	2	3	2	4	4	2	2	3	2	3
. Untrained staff	5	5	4	7	6	3	5	5	6	5	4	6	7
. No money for evaluation	6	6	6	6	5	5	6	7	5	4	4	5	5
. No time for evaluation	7	7	8	8	7	7	7	8	7	6	5	6	6
. Follow-up several weeks after course ends	8	7	7	5	8	8	8	6	8	6	6	7	8
6. REASONS FOR PARENT ENROLLMENT													
. Self-desire to be better parent	1	1	1	1	2	2	1	1	2	2	2	3	1
. Minor problems at home	2	1	2	3	3	1	2	1	1	1	1	2	3
. General interest in course topic	3	2	2	4	1	2	2	2	3	3	4	1	2
. Major home crisis	4	3	3	6	2	3	4	4	4	3	3	6	4
. School-related issues	5	4	5	2	5	4	3	3	6	5	5	5	5
. Lack of support from others	6	2	4	5	4	4	5	5	5	4	6	4	4
. To receive some other service	7	5	6	7	6	5	6	7	7	6	7	8	6
. Other	8	6	7	8	7	6	7	6	8	7	8	7	6
7. REASONS FOR PARENT DROPOUT													
. Lack of time	1	2	1	1	2	1	1	2	2	1	1	2	1
. Competing family obligations	2	1	2	4	1	2	2	1	3	2	2	1	4
. Lack of support from partner or spouse	3	4	4	3	3	3	4	4	4	3	3	3	2
. Work schedule changes	4	5	3	2	5	5	5	3	5	5	4	4	2
. Loss of interest	5	3	5	3	4	4	3	5	1	4	5	5	5
. Child care problems	6	8	6	4	7	6	7	6	8	8	6	8	6
. Shyness, especially in strange situation	7	6	8	6	6	7	6	7	6	7	7	6	8
. Achievement of goals	8	7	7	5	9	8	8	8	7	6	8	7	7
. Materials too sophisticated for clients	9	9	10	6	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	10	9
. Get all answers in first few sessions and need no more	10	10	9	7	8	10	10	10	10	11	11	9	11
. Materials not sophisticated enough	11	11	11	8	11	11	12	11	12	10	10	12	12
. Materials not in language of clients	12	12	12	9	10	12	11	12	11	12	12	11	10

*Rank order of response scores.

a wider range of families might be receiving parenting services thus increasing the potential for more relevance to those whose structures are changing.

2. Funding sources. Mostly federal funds was the top-ranked source of support for PEPs as reported by 86 (41.1%) of the 209 respondents. The second ranked sources of support for PEPs in the region as a whole were local, community-based and state funds, each based on indications from 66 or (31.6%) of the respondents. Somewhat lower ranked were client fees (21.4%, n = 44) and donations (12.4%, n = 26) as sources that PEPs depend upon for funds. These patterns tend to vary when examining the by state rankings in Table 3, Item 2. Variation is even more noticeable in the types of sponsoring organization rankings. Reasons for these ranking differences appear to be obvious concerning church-sponsored and private profit-making PEPs who reported depending mostly on client fees for funding. However, in the case where Louisiana and Oklahoma PEPs ranked local community-based funds as the source for most of their funds, the reasons were not as apparent.

Overall, donations were reported to be the lowest ranked source of funds for PEPs regionally, by state and by sponsoring organization. Results concerning sources of funds for PEPs tend to be indicative of the organizational structure within which each PEP is located. Thus, it appears that while most PEP funding generally stems from federal, state and local/community based sources, this may vary according to the type of sponsoring organization and/or the pecularities of a state. These findings offered no particular insight to the relevance of PEPs to changing family structures.

3. Program Activities. Results (See Table 3, Item 3) indicate that "Planned series of class meetings covering specific topics" was top-ranked as being most descriptive of activities in 126 (60.3%) of the 209 PEPs in the region. Activities which "Occur on a one-to-one basis" reported by 100 (47.8%) and those described as "Regularly scheduled meetings with changing topics" reported by 88 (42.1%) PEPs were ranked second and third, respectively. The type of activity least descriptive of those offered was "Periodic (4-6 times per year) meetings with changing topics" as reported by 50 (23.9%) PEPs. The total percentages and number of respondents do not equal 100% and 209, respectively, for these results because more than one item was checked in many cases.

When examining results by state and type of sponsoring organizations, the regional patterns tend to vary slightly. A total of 44 (62.9%) of the social service agency PEPs and 17 (63.0%) of the non-associated strictly local PEPs reported that "Occurs on a one-to-one basis between parent and staff" was top-ranked as being most descriptive of their activities. This appears to reflect a more individualized client approach for PEPs in these organizations. In Mississippi, "Regular meetings with changing topics" was reported by 15 (62.5%) PEPs as the top-ranked program activity. Results do not indicate what the reasons might be for these variations.

In general, it appears that most PEPs offer activities which are planned and sequenced according to topics. Further, since "Happens on a one-to-one basis" was the second ranked PEP activity, this seems to indicate that there is more of an attempt by PEPs to make their offerings relevant to the individual needs of clients served. Topic-specific, planned in a series, and individualization appear to be the more prominent charac-

teristics for the kinds of PEP activities offered. Activities of this kind would appear to be relevant to families whose structures have changed and those which are more traditional. The extent to which these characteristics make PEPs more relevant to the families whose structures are changing is not clear from the data.

4. Staffing Traits. Results in Table 3, Item 4 show that 141 (67.5%) of the 209 respondents in the region described most of their PEP instructors or group leaders as "Professionals in child development, social work, psychology, education, etc." The second ranked descriptor of most PEP staff was those having "Masters or Ph.D. Degrees" as indicated by 97 (46.1%) of respondents in the region. The lowest ranked descriptor of PEP staff was "Trained nurses" which described the majority of staff in only 10 (4.8%) of the 209 programs.

Exceptions to these general patterns were found in Mississippi, where "Having Masters or Ph.D. Degrees" was reported as most descriptive of PEP staff by 16 (66.7%) of the 24 respondents. Church sponsored PEPs varied slightly from regional findings in that their second best descriptor of most staff was "Trained laypersons" as reported by 15 (41.7%) of the 36 who responded.

When queried as to whether most staff were part-time or full-time, 95 (45.9%) of the 209 PEPs region-wide indicated that they were full-time. Only 52 (24.9%) stated that most staff were part-time. The pattern of most staff being full-time in the program was generally true in each state and type of sponsoring organization. Exceptions were Louisiana, where 12 (38.7%) of the 31 PEPs reported most of their staff were part-time with only 7 (22.6%) indicating most were full-time. In addition, 19 (52.8%) of

the 36 church PEPs had mostly part-time staff as did 16 (39.5%) of 43 private, profit-making PEPs. For non-associated, strictly local PEPs, 10 (37%) of the 27 were staffed with mostly full-time persons while 10 (37%) others had mostly part-time staff.

Overall, most PEP staff appear to be well-qualified in areas that activities are offered and, generally, are mostly employed on a full-time basis. These findings do not appear to have any discernable bearing on the relevance of PEPs to different kinds of family structures.

5. Evaluation. Findings in Table 3, Item 5 show that 152 (72.7%) of the 209 PEPs region-wide indicated "Informal evaluation at the end of a course" was the most common form of assessment utilized. This pattern held true in each state and in most of the sponsoring organizations. The lone exception was private profit-making sponsored PEPs with 31 (72.1%) of 43 respondents indicating that "Filling out a standard form at the end of a course" best described the most common type of assessment. The rankings of other kinds of PEP evaluation activities varied somewhat by state and by sponsoring organization.

Lowest ranked among the types of PEP evaluation region-wide was "Written follow-up evaluation usually several weeks after a course ends" as indicated by only 34 (16.3%) of the 209 respondents. This low ranking held true in all states except Mississippi and all sponsoring organizations. It would appear that PEPs, generally, do not know what impact course experiences have upon parents once they complete program courses or activities. The lack of such data seems to leave a void with respect to determining how effective and relevant PEPs are actually.

Results indicate that 107 (51.2%) of the 209 PEPs region-wide

reported their staffs as not being trained in evaluation methods, 118 (56.5%) reported that they do not have time for program evaluation, and 104 (49.8%) indicated that there is no money for evaluation. However, 90 (43.1%) of the PEPs in the region indicate that their funding source requires some form of evaluation. Overall, it appears that conducting PEP evaluation activities is complicated by three factors: (1) no time, (2) no money, and (3) lack of enough trained staff. For there to be clearer evidence of PEP relevance to families whose structures are changing, more evaluation of their outcomes and impact is needed. These findings appear to indicate that PEPs are not conducting the kinds of assessment activities which could better determine how relevant they are to changing family structures.

6. Reasons for Class Enrollment. Respondents were asked to indicate the reasons why clients enrolled in parent education courses. The reason ranked highest region-wide by 144 (68.9%) of the 209 PEPs was "Self-conscious decision to be better parents." Closely ranked as second by 141 (67.5%) PEPS was "Experiencing minor problems at home." Third highest ranked by 138 (66%) of the PEPs was "General interest in the topic being covered." Also ranked high as enrollment reasons by more than one-half the PEPs region-wide were "Major crisis at home" (52.6%, n = 110) and "School related issues" (50.7%, n = 106).

From these results, it appears that more parents want to become better in their roles and will avail themselves of such opportunities in PEPs. This seems to be a move away from the trend of parents keeping their child rearing problems within the family unit itself or only revealing them to a few close associates. Instead, it would appear that parents are reaching

out for assistance in areas they heretofore considered to be "taboo." If parents are enrolling in courses according to the number of reasons indicated, perhaps PEPs are providing relevant opportunities for parents whose structures are changing.

7. Reasons for Course Drop-Out. Results show that region-wide "Lack of time" ($\bar{x}$ = 2.79, n = 161) and "Competing family obligations" ($\bar{x}$ = 2.75, n = 163) ranked first and second, respectively, as the reasons parents most often drop out of PEP courses. Three other reasons for parent drop-out, which tended to cluster as a group, were "Lack of support from other partner" ($\bar{x}$ = 2.57, n = 158), "Changes in work schedule" ($\bar{x}$ = 2.55, n = 161), and "Loss of interest" ($\bar{x}$ = 2.55, n = 160). Lowest ranked as reasons for parents dropping out of courses were "Materials not being sophisticated enough for participants" ($\bar{x}$ = 1.72, n = 156) and "Materials not being in the language of participants" ($\bar{x}$ = 1.68, n = 158). Rankings by state and sponsoring organization vary somewhat from regional results. No clear reasons for this emerged from the findings. Five important reasons for parents dropping out of PEP courses are apparent from the findings. These reasons appear to be indicative of increased demands upon parents' time by their jobs as well as their families. In terms of when courses are offered, these seem to be important factors for PEPs to consider. Perhaps courses offered at more flexible times and more convenient locations may help reduce course drop-outs. These, of course, have staff time and budget implications for PEPs.

Lack of spouse or partner support and participant loss of interest are drop out reasons which appear to have implications for the content of PEP courses. Helping participants to deal with spouse or partner non-support

might be useful for reducing drop-outs. In addition, closing what appears to be a gap between that being offered and participant interests could help increase the "holding" power of PEP courses. These would seem to be two important considerations regarding PEP relevance. Attracting enrollees for courses and maintaining their participation once enrolled are critical aspects for helping to ensure PEP success. They are explicit measures upon which the relevance of PEPs can be assessed.

8. Other Characteristics. More than one-half of the region's PEPs (51.2%, n = 107) reported that their activities are directed toward a specific target group. Major target group categories included: (a) low income, (b) minorities, (c) abusive parents, and (d) parents of handicapped. This finding varied noticeably by state and by type of sponsoring organization. These findings were not clear regarding PEP relevance to families whose structures are changing in that such families could be part of any of the major target groups. Most PEPs 130 (62.2%) of 209 in the region do not charge parent fees for taking courses. Findings for PEPs in each state were similar except for Oklahoma, where a majority of PEPs indicated clients have to pay fees for courses. With respect to types of PEP sponsoring organizations, only findings for the private, profit-making group differed from regional results. A majority of PEPs in this type of organization do charge course fees.

PEP courses in the region overall are offered during the evening (75.6%, n = 158). Morning (53.6%, n = 112) and afternoon (48.3%, n = 110) offerings were the second and third most popular times. Least popular was PEP courses offered on the weekends (18.7%, n = 39). Regarding father participation in PEPs, 190 (90.9%) of the 209 respondents region-wide

indicated that such participation was important. Response patterns by state and sponsoring organizations concerning the importance of father participation was nearly the same as the region's. It would appear that PEP providers could enhance their program relevance through more vigorous efforts to involve fathers.

PEPs in the region can be further characterized as (a) offering about two courses simultaneously, (b) holding approximately five class meetings per course, and (c) conducting classes which last for about one hour and eighteen minutes. A total of 176 (84.2%) PEPS reported that they had specific goals. Babysitting services are generally not available for parents attending PEP courses as indicated by 102 (48.8%) of the 209 respondents. Further, almost one-fifth ($\bar{x}$ = 18.99) of the participants enrolling in PEP courses regionally do not complete them.

Results show that PEPs in the region serve anywhere from 5 to 5,500 participants during a year. On the average, evidence reveals that PEPs regionally serve more than three hundred fifty ($\bar{x}$ = 352.04) clients yearly. The characteristics briefly described in this section differed somewhat by state and by type of sponsoring organization. Those differences are not presented for discussion in this report.

D. Demographic Characteristics

1. Clients Served by Family Types. A major purpose of the survey was to determine to what extent PEPs were serving parents with changing family structures (e.g., single parent, divorced, remarried, foster, adoptive, etc.). Intact parent, first marriage families tend to dominate family types in this region (CENTER Interim Report, February 1980) and appear to be the major family type nation-wide. Results in Table 4 show

TABLE 4. COMPARISON OF DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLE RANKINGS* FOR PARTICIPANTS WHICH PARENT EDUCATION PROGRAMS SERVE

Demographic Variables	Region	By States						By Sponsoring Organizations					
		AR	LA	MS	NM	OK	TX	Pub. S.	Soc. S.	Church	Pvt. P-M	Pub. N-P	NA-Loc.
FAMILY TYPES													
Intact parents, first marriage	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Single parents, divorced	2	3	3	3	2	2	2	3	2	2	2	2	2
Teenage parents	3	2	2	4	3	6	6	5	3	3	3	4	3
Parents of handicapped	4	5	7	8	6	3	3	2	6	6	8	6	5
Stepparents	5	6	5	6	4	4	4	6	5	5	4	7	6
Single parents never married	6	4	6	2	7	9	5	4	4	4	7	3	4
Foster parents	7	7	4	5	5	5	8	7	7	7	5	5	7
Adoptive parents	8	8	8	7	8	8	7	8	8	8	6	8	8
Other	9	9	9	9	9	7	9	9	9	9	9	9	9
EMPLOYMENT PATTERNS													
Two parents working	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	2
One parent working, one parent at home	2	2	2	3	2	2	2	2	3	1	2	2	1
Single parent working	3	3	3	1	3	3	3	3	2	3	3	3	3
Single parent not working	4	4	5	4	4	5	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
Neither parent working	5	5	6	6	5	4	5	5	5	5	6	6	5
One parent with two jobs	6	6	4	5	6	6	6	6	6	6	5	5	6
RACIAL GROUPS													
White	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Black	2	2	2	1	4	3	3	2	2	2	3	2	3
Mexican American	3	3	3	3	2	2	2	3	3	3	2	3	2
American Indian	4	5	4	4	3	4	5	4	4	4	4	4	4
Asian	5	4	5	5	5	5	4	5	5	5	5	5	5
INCOME LEVELS													
Low (Less than $10,000)	1	1	3	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	3	1	1
Middle ($20,000-29,000)	2	3	1	3	3	3	2	2	3	2	1	3	2
Lower Middle ($10,000-19,000)	3	2	2	2	2	1	3	3	2	3	2	2	3
Upper Middle ($30,000-39,000)	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
Upper ($40,000 or more a year)	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5

*Rankings based upon mean response scores.

Sponsoring Organizations Key: Pub. S. - Public School System; Soc. S. - Social Service Agency; Church - Church or Other Religious Organization; Pvt. P-M - Private, Profit-Making Group; Pub. N-P - Public Non-Profit Group; NA-Loc. - No Association, Strictly Local Organization.

that the top-ranked family type of clients served by PEPs in the region was "Intact parents, first marriage" ($\bar{x}\%$ = 50.14). Evidence shows further that clients from "Single parents, divorced" families were the second ranked type most commonly served by PEPs regionally ($\bar{x}\%$ = 27.81). The family type of clients least served by PEPs was "Adoptive parents" ($\bar{x}\%$ = 20.79). The findings varied somewhat when examined by state and by sponsoring organization. Overall, it appears that PEPs are serving clients from the more traditional family type (i.e., intact, first married). However, PEPs seem to be increasing their relevance to families with changing structures as evidenced by "Single parents, divorced" being ranked as the second highest family type of the clients they serve.

2. Clients Served by Employment Patterns. Results (see Table 4) indicate that the top-ranked employment pattern of most clients served by PEPs was "Two parents working" ($\bar{x}\%$ = 40.97). Ranked second was the employment pattern "One parent working, one at home" ($\bar{x}\%$ = 38.16). The former finding appears to support the growing trend of more mothers returning to the work force while the latter is more typical of traditional family employment patterns in the nation. Of more interest are the third and fourth ranked family patterns regionally which vary slightly when examined by state, sponsoring organizations and funding sources. Both "Single parent working" ($\bar{x}\%$ = 27.74) and "Single parent not working" ($\bar{x}\%$ = 17.59), as employment patterns of clients served by PEPs, are indicative of changing family structures. Although families with these kinds of employment patterns apparently are served in lesser numbers by PEPs when compared to the top ranked patterns, it would appear that PEPs are increasingly providing services to clients in families whose structures are changing. This seems

to reflect a growing relevance of PEPS to these kinds of families.

3. Clients Served by Racial Groups. Census data (CENTER Interim Report, February 1980) indicate that Whites represent the largest percentage of the region's population. Results (see Table 4) indicate that Whites are the top-ranked racial client group served by PEPs regionally ($\bar{x}\%$ = 59.53), by state, by sponsoring organizations. Blacks were second ranked ($\bar{x}\%$ = 29.91) as the racial group most served by PEPs in the region. Mexican Americans are the third ranked racial client group served by most PEPs in the region. These patterns vary somewhat by state and by sponsoring organization. The variations tend to be indicative of population patterns found in the region and states individually. Mean rankings indicate that more Blacks and Mexican American clients are served by PEPs mostly dependent upon federal funds. Mexican Americans are least served by PEPs dependent mostly on donations whereas PEPs with funding mostly from client fees serve the least number of Blacks. In terms of PEP sponsoring organizations, more Blacks were served by those associated with public schools with the fewest served by PEPs associated with private profit groups. Mexican Americans also were more served by public school PEPs but least served by church/religious group affiliated PEPs.

4. Clients Served by Income Level. PEPs, regionally serve more low income level clients ($\bar{x}\%$ = 49.08) than any of the other income levels (see Table 4). This pattern varies by state and by sponsoring organization. Middle income clients were the second ranked ($\bar{x}\%$ = 32.24) client group that most PEPs serve. However, third but closely ranked, was the lower middle income client group. Some variation in these patterns can be seen in state and sponsoring organization rankings (Table 4).

Results indicate overall that low income clients are served most by PEPs. While the data do not provide reason or cause for this, the deficit model issue or question could be raised with respect to whether PEP providers perceive that low income clients are in need of more parent education services solely because of their SES status. No insights to this question are evident in the findings presented and a response might be affected somewhat by the overall indication that an increasing number of middle income clients are being served by PEPs. Based upon the client income level findings, it would appear that no conclusive evidence is provided with respect to the relevance of PEPs for families with changing structures.

SUMMARY

Findings were presented and discussed which attempted to show how relevant PEPs were to changing family structures. Relevancy was examined from the perspective of four variables: (1) the types of families whose issues are addressed, (2) the major topics of program activities, (3) key characteristics of programs, and (4) selected demographic variables. Based upon the results of the study, seven conclusions with respect to PEP relevance for families with changing structures are offered. These conclusions are drawn and presented essentially with respect to the region as a whole. The reason for this is that state and sponsoring organization findings overall were similar to regional results. In cases where there were noticeable differences, the data did not clearly indicate why they existed.

First, the family type served by most PEPs was best described as "Intact parents, first marriage." This is the dominant family type in American society today (Pitkin and Masnick, 1980). Thus, PEPs still

provide most services for the dominant family type. However, there is evidence of movement toward serving emerging family types as seen in the finding that "Single parents, divorced" was ranked second as the type of family PEPs serve. These findings were generally the same by state and by sponsoring organization. From the standpoint of types of families served, it would appear that PEPs generally are becoming relevant to families with changing structures.

Second, "Two parents working" was top-ranked percentage-wise as the employment pattern of clients served by regional PEPs. This family type is growing in numbers and shall reach proportions by 1990 to have a significant effect on consumption, time use and mobility patterns (Masnick and Bane, 1980). Since the emergence of this family type of employment pattern is increasing, PEPs are having to provide services slightly different from those usually offered. Such factors as best available time for courses, content and format of courses, and directing activities toward both parents instead of one would seem to be important considerations. Further evidence of service to families with changing structure can be seen with the finding that "Single parent, working" was the third ranked employment pattern of clients served by PEPs. Examination of state and sponsoring organization findings revealed very similar patterns generally. Thus, PEPs appear to be relevant to clients with changing family structures based upon reports of employment patterns for those being served.

Third, it would appear that the racial breakdown of clients served by PEPs is consistent with regional census data compiled earlier by the project (CENTER Interim Report to NIE, February 1980). The top-ranked racial groups served by PEPs overall in the region are Anglos, Blacks, and Mexican

Americans, respectively. These patterns vary by state where there are more concentrations of certain groups (i.e., Mexican Americans and Native Americans in New Mexico; Mexican Americans in Texas). Results of racial groups served by PEPs do not offer any conclusive evidence with respect to relevance for families whose structures are changing.

Fourth, PEPs overall serve mostly low income clients. However, there are noticeable ranking differences in Louisiana, Oklahoma, and private profit-making PEPs. Generally, lower middle and middle income clients are served second-most by PEPs. Thus, it appears that PEPs, while directing most of their efforts toward low income clients, are beginning to serve an increasing number of middle income clients. The latter seems to be a noticeable departure from the target group focus of PEPs during the 1960s and early 1970s. Findings, however, have no direct bearing upon PEP relevance to families with changing structures.

Fifth, PEPs can be generally characterized as (1) being part of some larger organizational structure, (2) funded mostly with federal monies, and (3) direct their activities toward specific target groups. Further, PEPs, overall, plan their activities on a long-range basis and do not charge their clients fees for courses. PEP staff usually work full-time and have professional staff with training in related specializations (e.g., child development, etc.). There are clearly defined reasons which motivate parents to enroll in PEP courses and specific reasons why they drop out of courses. In both cases, it appears that how PEPs attempt to develop activities which take into account these reasons will be essential in determining their relevance to parents, especially those with changing family structures. However, it is not clear from the findings how relevant

PEPs are to families with changing structures.

Although most PEPs indicate that informal evaluations are conducted at the end of courses, this appears to be insufficient in providing them with true assessments of impact, effectiveness, and/or relevance. Lacking more rigorous kinds of assessments may be a contributing factor to the dearth of information necessary for determining PEP relevance.

Thus, while it is concluded that results seem to indicate that PEPs are showing signs of becoming relevant to families whose structures are changing, it appears overall that most PEP activities are still being provided for "traditional" families. In that sense, PEPs are not relevant to families with changing family structures based upon reports of family issues addressed, topics of program activities, descriptions of program characteristics and descriptions of participants served.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Parent education programs hold much promise as a means of providing assistance to those who are involved with parenting roles. As such, PEPs must be aware of the complexities of parenting as a process, the extraneous factors impacting upon the process and those involved, the range of program alternatives and activities which can enhance the process, the need to effectively assess what is or has occurred so as to increase effectiveness, especially regarding families whose structures are changing and have to deal with a slightly different set of issues, concerns, and needs. While some of this awareness appears to be evident in PEPs for this region, increased awareness and action is needed since there is a noticeable growth in the number of families with structures different from the traditional family type. It is felt that the findings from this

study can contribute toward making the awareness and action needed more a reality with respect to PEPs and, thus, the families they serve. As a result, the following recommendations are offered.

1. That PEPs more systematically identify families with structures which vary from traditional form, determine their needs and provide them with relevant services.
2. That PEPs seek to devise and implement a more comprehensive evaluation of the activities provided for clients to enhance program relevance.
3. That PEPs develop more viable methods of offering services which are sensitive to reasons which cause clients to enroll and/or drop out of courses which in effect should help reduce irrelevance.
4. That PEPs develop more of their activities around the assumption that parents want to be better parents and further reduce the deficit approach which centers around someone else wanting them to be better parents.
5. That CENTER (SEDL) staff conduct further analyses of the survey data to determine if there are causal factors contributing to patterns especially among and between family types, racial groups, income levels, employment patterns when examined according to each of the sponsoring organizations and states in the region.

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